

Christ Church Elbow Park Archives

**Interview with Elizabeth (Liz) Hann**

**Christ Church Elbow Park Oral History Project 2020**

Interviewer: Catherine Evamy

6 December 2020

2 PM

Zoom Interview

## Transcript of Elizabeth (Liz) Hann

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Interviewed by Catherine Evamy

Catherine Evamy, Interviewer

Elizabeth (Liz) Hann, Narrator

**Catherine Evamy:** My name is Catherine Evamy and the date today is the 6th of December, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, I'm distance interviewing a Christ Church parishioner called Elizabeth Hann. Liz is what you like to be called, I think.

**Elizabeth Hann (Liz):** Yes.

**Catherine:** This interview is being recorded for the Christ Church archives and will be made available to researchers. You will be given a transcript of the recording and will have the opportunity to review it and reconsider any portions of the interview at that time. Is that okay with you?

**Liz:** Absolutely.

**Catherine:** Please tell us something about yourself, including your name and where you were born.

**Liz:** I was born in Calgary (as Liz Kostashuk) and really not too far from where I live now, which was unusual. When I was growing up, I remember getting the new encyclopedias in the time when we used to have encyclopedias in everyone's house, and looking up the city of Calgary. I was maybe in grade one or grade two. The population was about 300,000 people at the time and no one in Calgary was from Calgary. My parents were from outside of Calgary, as were my best friend's parents. You never knew anybody who was born and raised in Calgary.

I grew up believing that when you start your career or when you start your life as an adult, you're to do that in a different city and there seemed to be something evolutionary about it that we're spreading out our families all over the world. I never expected that I would be working in Calgary and here I am. I've lived a couple of other places in between, but Calgary is where I've settled and where I'm raising my family.

**Catherine:** Did you go to school here and university?

**Liz:** I did. I was in the bilingual program when it first started in the public schools in Calgary. I went to French school up until high school when I went to Bishop Carroll, where you work at your own rate rather than in a classroom environment with other students. It worked well in my life, as I was riding horses at the time. Some mornings I would drive out to the ranch, ride horses, and then go to school. As long as you completed your studies on time, it was the right place to be. I enjoyed working on my own and learning on my own.

When I finished high school I was going to become a veterinarian. I went to the University of Saskatchewan. I wanted to be an equine doctor, but discovered that my aptitude at biology was not strong enough for it to be fair to the little animals. My math and physics and chemistry grades were great, but after first year I had seen my last math or physics course. Biology was all memory work and so I thought I should reconsider my vocation. I took some time to travel and came back to Calgary.

I did some traveling in Europe, backpacking for four months, and then came back home. Both my brothers had gone through engineering, and the younger one suggested I do the same. He said, "It's what you've GOT to do." I thought it would be too hard, but he convinced me to at least try. It was hard, but I ended up loving it. I was living on my own in a basement suite in Windsor Park. I applied to the University of Calgary and that's where I got my engineering degree. Then, consequently, a job in the oil patch. I spent a year in Northern Alberta and some summers in small towns and then came back to Calgary.

**Catherine:** I will ask you about your horses. Did you do Western riding or jumping or--

**Liz:** I did jumping. Most of my time was spent at a ranch known as Black Diamond Land and Cattle Company right across from Millarville racetrack. We still called it Graham's ranch because Pip and Nicky Graham were the original owners. I was competing at three-day eventing and jumping and we threw in a little western once in a while. My best friend rode western. I would go on pack trips with her; we spent a week in the Porcupine Hills on horseback and it was fabulous.

She and I have done some trips. We did a horseback ride for 10 days in the Bordeaux region in France. It was the best way to travel. You get the best parking. You don't have to worry about diesel buses and we stayed at a different chateau every night. It was wonderful.

**Catherine:** How do you keep in touch with your equestrian interests?

**Liz:** Well, probably once or twice a year, my best friend and I will go horseback riding. When I first started as an engineer, I leased a horse in Northern Alberta, and then when I came back to Calgary, my sister-in-law and I shared a horse for a while. The time commitment didn't really mesh well with my career. There are always little opportunities to ride here and there and you take advantage of them when they come.

**Catherine:** Of course. You are in the oil patch still as an engineer. Which particular kind of engineering? Chemical engineering, mechanical?

**Liz:** I graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering and I did mechanical design and then a lot of project engineering. Then I shifted into business development and I've also been in research. My favourite has been development engineering, where you evaluate different opportunities, gather the analyses from the various experts, focus in on the most promising prospects, gather better information, develop the economics and finally bring a concept to reality.

That's really what I enjoy most: analyzing the data, bringing everything together, working with the geologists, geophysicists, design engineers, understanding the reservoir, and then pitching the idea. The most exciting part is when somebody gives you the opportunity to prove you're right, and you get to execute the project and see it come to life.

Right now, my work is more on the business side, working with other partner companies, negotiating new agreements and making sure our contracts and our relationships with partners are well-managed.

**Catherine:** Your mathematical skills are still highly involved with what you're doing?

**Liz:** Yes. I sometimes say that English is my second language, that math is my first.

**Catherine:** What brought you to Christ Church?

**Liz:** I have a bit of a history with Christ Church. I attended Brownies and Girl Guides at Christ Church, but my family church was Southminster United. Often, I attended my best friend's family's church. She moved to Vancouver, but I would still go to her church. Church faded away for a bit when I got married, as my husband, Sean, and I were competing in triathlons. We would run every Sunday for two hours and then relax, so we didn't really make time for church.

Then we had our son, Liam. In 2011, when Liam was five years old, we went on a family trip to Ontario to see my in-laws. They have a farm near Mount Forest and my mother-in-law, Raymie brought out a box of keepsakes from Sean's childhood. When Sean and I were out on a date and Raymie was watching over Liam, they were going through this box of keepsakes and Liam pulled out Sean's first communion gift, which was a plastic glow-in-the-dark crucifix in true 1970s workmanship.

Liam was completely distracted by the image of Christ on the cross and asked my mother-in-law, "What is happening to this man?" My mother-in-law is Catholic and her explanation of the crucifixion may have seemed a little too matter-of-fact for Liam, but I think she didn't want to shock him or scare him. She tried to put it in a very good context and Liam ended up saying, "I'm getting sad. I think I need a hug." So they shared a big hug. The next day, Liam kept on asking about Jesus and asking about this crucifix and what had happened.

We ended up at a country fair, St. Jacobs Market. We were talking to some locals, like you do, and Liam got the attention of one of the women. He was saying, "Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me" and she finally turned to him and said, "Yes." I heard Liam say, "It's very sad that Jesus had to die on the cross for us." I thought, "Oh my gosh," this has impacted this little boy and as he continued to ask questions, I said to Sean, "This isn't something we should be homeschooling. We should find a church."

I sent Sean out church hunting and said, "You see what you can find and let me know, I want to hear your recommendation," because I wanted Sean to really buy into it. He came to Christ Church and he spoke with Ansley [Tucker] and Tara Livingston. Sean was very taken by both of them. We started attending Christ Church and it was just the perfect timing for Liam. He was just starting school and being acquainted with the classroom environment. He could come to Christ Church and Sunday school, and he was just accepted and had so much love and it did so much for him. That's how we came about it. It was through a 1970s plastic glow-in-the-dark crucifix.

**Catherine:** What a wonderful story that is.

**Liz:** Thank you.

**Catherine:** Your husband then was brought up as a Catholic in a Catholic household.

**Liz:** Yes.

**Catherine:** He has made the transition, and finds Christ Church compatible for him?

**Liz:** Yes.

**Catherine:** In terms of the style of services?

**Liz:** Well, Christ Church definitely sticks with tradition and the services are very comfortably traditional, I would say. We bug Sean that it's Catholic-lite. It's the same religion, but maybe half the guilt.

**Catherine:** [laughs] That actually speaks to the question that you suggested about what are the characteristics in Christ Church that you have found and now you have just described them.

**Liz:** Yes, that's true.

**Catherine:** I know Liam does come to church, because I see him occasionally with you. It was Liam's curious and probing mind that brought you to Christ Church. What activities did you get involved with yourself?

**Liz:** I helped out a little bit with the Sunday School and Liam loved when I showed up to be part of it. Oh, he's such a good son and he was always thrilled when his Mum was leading the class,

but I think the first thing I was asked to do was maybe the readings, and then prayers for the people, and I can't remember the sequence of it all.

When the Trinity of Improvements — the renovations to the church — began, Ansley asked if as an engineer and with my project experience, if I would join, what at the time was called the Board of Management, part of the Parish Council, now called the Management Committee of Parish Council. I just finished my six-year term there and chaired for a couple of years and that was an amazing experience.

Some of the members of Parish Council and Management Committee, and Mission Committee are just amazing business people, amazing community people, and great to be associated with, and great mentors. I've made connections with people. I can sit down and ask business advice and all kinds of things.

Those were the first activities that I became involved in.

We've always enjoyed the Stampede service, the Stampede breakfast, and the family picnics. Building the labyrinth was a fantastic event and so was the community kitchen. So many activities that go on at Christ Church are so incredibly well-organized. Building the labyrinth wasn't putting a few bricks together to make a pattern. There were kitchen services going on the entire time, making meals, and in between meals, making snacks, and setting up tables in the Memorial Garden with tablecloths and flowers in vases on every table. There was a complete crew supporting the people putting down the bricks, which were laid four times over. The labyrinth is some of the best masonry you'll find in the city, I'm sure.

The book studies are fantastic. I enjoy being a part of that. I find getting together as a group of two or three in study brings so much depth and so much more meaning, it adds different perspectives to what we're studying. It really shows that when you're trying to understand or discuss complex issues, having more mind power together really brings out so much more meaning.

**Catherine:** What are some of the books that you were studying?

**Liz:** Early last year we went through *Christian Foundations* which was a Bible study that provided a lot of history and context. Right now, we're working through *Spiritual Classics*, which is a compilation from various authors on the 12 spiritual disciplines. I think my favourite chapter was that written by Martin Luther King but there are a number of great perspectives, and the group discussion is nothing short of inspiring. The readings are short and contemplative. We will read a short chapter, contemplate it on our own for a week, meet and discuss it, then spend another week contemplating it before we start the next reading. It's not a great deal of reading, but a ton of discussion.

**Catherine:** In-depth?

**Liz:** In-depth. Very in-depth, yes.

**Catherine:** Do just parishioners attend these book groups or are other people from the community present?

**Liz:** It's been just parishioners and there may be an opportunity to bring other people from the community in to participate. The discussion is fantastic and a lot of different opinions are floated around. It's very welcoming, because I think people realize you don't have to all be in alignment with everyone's ideas. I think in the end, when you have all these different perspectives, we tend to walk out more in alignment than we may know and with a lovely, balanced consensus.

**Catherine:** Are you studying the present situation, where the young people today, many of whom statistically do not attend church, are assailed by so many things in their lives, whether it's bullying or online lies and deceptions?

**Liz:** Yes, absolutely. Those discussions become so valuable, because you can pick up little nuggets of information and references in the scripture that will resonate with you, or maybe they'll just sit at the back of your mind. There have been times at work and in discussion with Liam when you can bring something very relevant from what you've learned from the discussion on the scriptures into the conversation. There are times when you're really walking with the other person at work or with youth and offering them a solution or perspective that has its foundation in Christianity.

It's neat how it resonates with them or how they can accept it as a different and productive and constructive way of looking at things. I don't look for those opportunities, but those opportunities seem to happen. It was my best friend's parents who used to say you don't want to blind with light and choke with salt. You want to walk with someone and share with them something that's going in their direction, and I think it provides comfort and resonates with them.

**Catherine:** You say that sometimes these opportunities arise at work, in an adult environment?

**Liz:** Yes, they do. I think more relevant to me has been taking some of what I've learned or heard from discussions or homilies at Christ Church, and applying that at work. One example that worked for me and just helped with stress at work was when I had a VP who yelled a lot. It wasn't specific to me. I had the office next door, and heard a lot of yelling that went on. It wasn't comfortable, it wasn't nice to witness, and it wasn't nice to be on the receiving end of it.

It was when Helen Belcher was serving as interim rector at the church and she did a sermon on I think it's the 1 Corinthians 13, "love is patient, love is kind". She said, "It's always read at weddings and why is it only read at weddings? Why isn't it applied at work?" I thought, wow, you'd never think of using the word *love* at work. In fact, you'd be worried that human resources would be after you if you said *love*. I thought, I've really got to try that. I think Helen's homily was it's easy to apply love with those who are close to you, but what about your enemy, and what about being patient, being kind, and being generous? I started thinking about 1 Corinthians 13 in stressful situations at work, and it helped.

It certainly was an evolution, but then you pick up little nuggets here and there that will support it. In one of Brandon's [Witwer] book studies, we were talking about submission and submitting to God's will. Submission is hard to take in the context of it being anything but a weakness or surrender, but if you think of it as love and submitting in love, and as strength, comfort, the word comfort being derived from *fort*, from strength. Taking submission and love is patient and love is kind and applying it makes it easier to find happiness in a stressful environment.

This is a very secular application of it, submitting with love and joy to the things that don't always make sense to you. What matters more is finding that joy and happiness. Sometimes when you do submit with love, you get alignment when you're not even trying and it starts making more sense to everyone.

**Catherine:** Your attitude and behaviour is obviously modelling the Christian message in a very secular environment. Your son, Liam, now must be in his middle teenage years ?

**Liz:** Yes, he's just turned 14.

**Catherine:** That is a challenging age for girls and boys.

**Liz:** We're in good hands, when you think about the youth of today being the leaders of tomorrow. I tell that to Liam and his friends when I witness their behaviour and how they work together; they are just a great network and some great kids. I've had sleepovers with them and they're awake at 2:00, 2:30 in the morning. The only reason I know they were awake is because one was texting his mom, sending her a picture of how they had pranked the one boy who fell asleep the earliest. They stacked lightweight items on top of him and then were all posing in front of him and taking selfies.

Of all things, for the one boy to be texting his mom this prank selfie at 2:30 in the morning, I think that's the worst behaviour I've seen from these guys and it's hardly bad if it involves texting your mother. I think they've got some good foundations and they work well with each other, but in times of struggle it's great to be able to have a reference that's lasted for thousands of years.

**Catherine:** The other interesting question that you raised is, what changes have you seen in Christ Church since you've been a member?

**Liz:** I mentioned the Trinity of Improvements. We've seen some beautiful, amazing aesthetic changes to the church just through the talent of our parishioners, and people like Fred Valentine, who's the architect who designed the improvements. Then the big changing of the guard when Tara left, and then Ansley left, and now we have David [Pickett] and Brandon. They're very different than what we had before.

There have been changes in outreach and community kitchen, the monthly meals that we used to make with members from CUPS (Calgary Urban Project Society) and families that had less means, and the wonderful gatherings that we'd have with them. The programs are always coming



and going, but the amazing thing that stays constant is the community and the people. When I prepared my last letter to the annual report as the chair of the Management Committee, I thought about how the people are so constant at Christ Church. We've got families that go back for multiple generations, four or five generations of the same family attending the church, and that same enthusiasm and energy and passion and grace continues.

I thought about the story that they teach you as a child with putting your hands together with your fingers on the inside [demonstrating]: "Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors and see all the people" with your wiggling people-fingers on the inside of your church-hands. Then they would do "Here's the church with your fingers on the outside. Here's the steeple, open the door, and where are all the people?" I remember as a little girl feeling a little bit sad, "Where are all the people? What is going on?" I never liked it when there were no people inside the church. I realized when I really thought about it, that those fingers on the outside really are the people, they're the buttresses of the church. They're the structure that keeps it going and they're never gone. They're always a part of it. Especially at Christ Church, that energy, that enthusiasm, that grace, that passion, that involvement, that inquisitiveness is constant.

**Catherine:** There certainly have been changes in the clergy and the services have changed, and the music has adjusted. It's very interesting to hear you speak about the satisfaction you've received from the activities you've been involved with at Christ Church.

**Liz:** I'd look to Sunday to carry me through the week, especially when times are stressful with work. I was in university when the Anglican Church made the decision to allow female priests. I remember one of my classmates, whose background is Jewish said, "I would quit being Jewish if they allowed female rabbis." Saying it in my presence, and in our homeroom classroom, I thought, "What an amazing thing for him to say."

At that time, only 10% of the population of the engineering faculty was women, but I think the graduates were 30% or 40% women. In between first year and fourth year when you graduate, it was really the men who were dropping out and the women who were staying in. Now, we take it for granted that women can be priests. We don't think twice of it, do we?

**Catherine:** There are some people who still resist-

[laughter]

**Catherine:** People get entrenched in a particular understanding of what they perceive to be the truth of things and it's very difficult to dislodge that thinking. We've made great strides in that respect. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your feelings about Christ Church, and where you think it might be going in the future? How it might be changing over time?

**Liz:** We always have such great leadership in all of our programs. There are probably 40 different volunteer groups that are doing different things within the church. I think we're going to

see a change in our outreach, we've done a great job in sponsoring families. In fact, I don't think we actually sponsored families, rather, we took over the sponsorship.

We failed at getting a family to sponsor just because of the popularity of the program, but we were able to step in with three different families when the original sponsors were no longer there to support them. With the changes with COVID right now, we still are supplying our families with assistance, but we're not expecting to see a new refugee family coming in the next little while.

I expect to see a regrowth and a new energy going into other venues and other areas where they're needed. The great thing is that we have such engaged, involved, and impassioned parishioners that we see the new opportunities and are able to step in and help and make a difference where it's needed most. I think the foundation's going to remain the same. This amazing piece of property that we have is probably not permanent but it's going to be there for a long time and I think that there are a lot of people who walk through those doors and feel at home.

I think that they might have a new face shaking their hand or welcoming them, or with COVID maybe fist pump or elbows.

[laughter]

There'll still be changes to our social lives because of what's happening in the world. I see Christ Church as this constant that's going to continue.

**Catherine:** Well, that statement is a lovely way to end this. Thank you so much, Liz. This has been very interesting and you're very insightful. I think this has just being super to hear your take on things.

**Liz:** Thank you, Catherine. As I said when you asked, I'm humbled to be asked and it's an absolute privilege to be part of Christ Church. Thank you for your lovely questions.

**Catherine:** Well, maybe in time, when things have settled down and you're not quite so busy, you might consider interviewing some other folks in Christ Church?

**Liz:** Absolutely, yes.

**Catherine:** Well, that would be great. Frits, our chairman, will be absolutely delighted to hear that. It's been good of you to take this time.

**Liz:** Thank you, Catherine. Thanks for taking the time to do this.

**Catherine:** Keep well.

**Liz:** Okay, you too. All the best.

**Catherine:** Bye.

**Liz:** Bye.